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The Lion for Real (04:14)

Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997)

Monday 10 March 2008

Reading at the Poetry Center, San Francisco State University February 27, 1959

I came home and found a lion in my living room
Rushed out on the fire escape screaming Lion! Lion!
Two stenographers pulled their brunette hair and banged the window shut
I hurried home to Patterson and stayed two days

Called up old Reichian analyst who'd kicked me out of therapy for smoking marijuana
'It's happened' I panted
'There's a Lion in my living room' 'I'm afraid any discussion would have no value' he hung up

I went to my old boyfriend we got drunk with his girlfriend I kissed him and announced I had a lion
with a mad gleam in my eye We wound up fighting on the floor I bit his eyebrow he kicked me out
I ended up masturbating in his jeep parked in the street moaning 'Lion.'

Found Joey my novelist friend and roared at him 'Lion!' He looked at me interested and read me his
spontaneous ignu high poetries I listened for lions all I heard was Elephant Tiglon Hippogriff Unicorn
Ants But figured he really understood me when we made it in Ignaz Wisdom's bathroom.

But next day he sent me a leaf from his Smoky Mountain retreat 'I love you little Bo-Bo with your
delicate golden lions But there being no Self and No Bars therefore the Zoo of your dear Father hath
no lion You said your mother was mad don't expect me to produce the Monster for your Bridegroom.'

Confused dazed and exalted bethought me of real lion starved in his stink in Harlem Opened the
door the room was filled with the bomb blast of his anger He roaring hungrily at the plaster walls but
nobody could hear outside thru the window My eye caught the edge of the red neighbor apartment
building standing in deafening stillness We gazed at each other his implacable yellow eye in the red
halo of fur Waxed rhuemy on my own but he stopped roaring and bared a fang greeting. I turned my
back and cooked broccoli for supper on an iron gas stove boiled water and took a hot bath in the old
tub under the sink board.

He didn't eat me, tho I regretted him starving in my presence. Next week he wasted away a sick rug
full of bones wheaten hair falling out enraged and reddening eye as he lay aching huge hairy head
on his paws by the egg-crate bookcase filled up with thin volumes of Plato, & Buddha.

Sat by his side every night averting my eyes from his hungry motheaten face stopped eating myself
he got weaker and roared at night while I had nightmares Eaten by lion in bookstore on Cosmic
Campus, a lion myself starved by Professor Kandisky, dying in a lion's flophouse circus, I woke up
mornings the lion still added dying on the floor—'Terrible Presence!' I cried 'Eat me or die!'

It got up that afternoon—walked to the door with its paw on the south wall to steady its
trembling body Let out a soul-rending creak from the bottomless roof of his mouth thundering from
my floor to heaven heavier than a volcano at night in Mexico Pushed the door open and said in a
gravelly voice "Not this time Baby—; but I will be back again."

Lion that eats my mind now for a decade knowing only your hunger Not the bliss of your satisfaction
O roar of the universe how am I chosen In this life I have heard your promise I am ready to die I have
served Your starved and ancient Presence O Lord I wait in my room at your Mercy.

Paris, March 1958

Post-scriptum :



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